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STATE FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/15/2019
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [AS](#)
SUBJECT: LIBERTAD ACT REVIEW - AUSTRALIA

REF: A. 2008 STATE 126578
[1](#)B. 2008 CANBERRA 519

Classified By: ACTING ECONCOUNS W ALBRIGHT, REASONS 1.4 B, D

[1](#)1. (U) Cuba is not a front-burner issue in Australia. It is far from Australia and there are few political, economic, or cultural ties.

[1](#)2. (C) Following is keyed to reftel questions.

- Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

- Has the host country made public statements or undertaken other governmental actions, such as resolutions in the national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; or actions in support of civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic missions or other fora.

The GOA has expressed its concern over the human rights record of the Castro regime, multilaterally and bilaterally. This has included non-support for NAM UNCHR resolutions that targeted the Libertad Act, GOA support for U.S. resolutions on Cuba's human rights record, and "frequent diplomatic representations" on human rights issues. The GOA has specifically voiced opposition to Cuba's "restriction of freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement, and the press." The GOA has also voted in support of UN resolutions to end the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba, believing that "confrontation and isolation" are not productive policies in relation to Cuba.

[1](#)3. (C) Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the host country in the past six months?

No. However, as expected (ref B), Cuba did open a new Embassy in Canberra in September 2008; Cuba's new Ambassador Abelardo Curbelo Padron presented his credentials on October 30, 2008. It is a two-person mission which the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Cuba desk officer said does not appear to be very active. Cuba also maintains a Consulate General in Sydney.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Did the host country offer or deliver humanitarian or other assistance to the Cuban people in the wake of the major damage caused by Hurricanes Gustav (August 30) and Ike (September 8)?

Yes. The GOA has no assistance program in Latin American and the Caribbean. However, the GOA provided A\$1,000,000 (US\$675,000 at today's exchange rate) to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, for their relief efforts for Cuba, for Hurricanes Gustav, Hannah, and Ike, and Tropical Storm Fay. The funding was for relief supplies, temporary shelter, health services, and other emergency relief activities.

[1](#)5. (SBU) What is the nature of investments (and names, if

known) that host country businesses have in Cuba? What host country businesses participated in the Havana Trade Fair (November 3)?

The GOA describes Australian investment in Cuba as "minimal." Australian businesses are not known to have participated in the Havana Trade Fair.

16. (SBU) Are there any bilateral trade agreements or other cooperative agreements between host country and Cuba?

There are no bilateral trade agreements between Australia and Cuba. Two-way trade between Australia and Cuba in 2007-08 totaled A\$19 million (approximately US\$13 million); Australia's exports (A\$12m) were primarily electrical circuits equipment; the major import was manufactured tobacco products.

17. (SBU) Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in host country?

No.

MCCALLUM